

East Don Trail Project Environmental Assessment

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #5 Notes

Thursday March 6, 2014
Flemingdon Health Centre – Community Room
10 Gateway Boulevard, Toronto
6:30 – 8:30 pm

Meeting Chair: Adele Freeman
Note Taker: Natalie Seniuk

ATTENDANCE	
Name	Affiliation
Jennifer Hyland	City of Toronto
Maogosha Pyjor	City of Toronto
Wendy Strickland	City of Toronto
Natalie Seniuk	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Violetta Tkazcuk	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Lisa Turnbull	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Munjeera Jefford	Action for Neighbourhood Change/Hub, Victoria Village
Ronald Kluger	Bike 25
John Taranu	Cycle Toronto
Andy Wickens	Don Watershed Regeneration Council
Louis Fliss	Flemingdon Health Centre - Alternate
John Routh	Friends of the Don East
Paula Davies	Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
Charles Chaffey	Toronto Field Naturalists
Anne Marie Leger	Toronto Ornithological Club
Mike Jones	Walk Toronto
Regrets: Terry West (Don Mills Residents Inc.), Chris Winsor (Resident Ward 29), Nancy Smith Lea (Toronto Centre for Active Transportation), George Bizios (Victoria Village Community Association), Jon Riddell (Woodbine Gardens Homeowners Association), David Moore (Wynford Concorde Residents Group)	

WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair, Adele Freeman (AF or The Chair) – Director of Watershed Management Division at Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) - welcomed everyone to Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting #5. AF informed CLC Members that Lisa Turnbull (LT) – Project Manager at TRCA – would be recording key comments throughout the duration of the meeting, and that Natalie Seniuk - (NS) – Project Coordinator with TRCA – would be recording meeting notes.

The Chair provided an overview of the materials provided as part of CLC Meeting #5, including: PowerPoint Presentation, Agenda, and Handouts to be completed by CLC Members.

The Chair handed the meeting over to Violetta Tkaczuk (VT) – Project Manager at TRCA- for the presentation.

HOUSEKEEPING AND UPDATES

VT reviewed the agenda for CLC Meeting #5 including the intended purpose of the meeting which was 1) to provide an update about where we are in the process, 2) to provide a summary of the public and stakeholder feedback that was received after CLC#4 and Public Information Centre #2 (PIC), 3) to present the refinements to phase 2 of the EA process with a focus on areas 1 and 2 and, 4) to receive feedback and input from members regarding the evaluation of the refined trail alignments as prepared by the project team.

Confirmation of CLC Meeting #4 Notes

VT asked CLC members if there were any changes or corrections required to the Meeting Notes from CLC #4. Participants did not have any comments. The CLC #4 Meeting Notes were accepted as presented.

Project Updates

VT provided an update regarding the project process and timelines, a summary of the public and stakeholder feedback received after CLC Meeting #4 and PIC#2, and how that impacted the materials that were to be presented including further refinements to Phase 2 of the process in Areas 1 and 2.

VT notified members that two tables were provided as part of the materials for the meeting. Table 1 contained the feedback received from CLC members regarding the Baseline Environmental Inventory (BEI) and the project team responses. Table 2 contained items that were noted as action items during previous CLC meetings, and the project team responses.

VT noted that any questions about the tables provided could be discussed at the end of the meeting as there was a substantial amount of new information to discuss at the meeting.

REFINEMENT OF ALTERNATIVE TRAIL ALIGNMENTS – AREA 1

VT presented the refinements to the Area 1 alignments as a result of public feedback. This included the addition of Forest Trail C, and the evaluation of Forest Trail C against Forest Trail A (preliminary preferred alternative).

CLC Question

Will a switchback or ramp be required to get up to the top of bank for Forest Trail C – (see photos 4 and 5 in presentation)

Project Team Response

Yes a structure will be required however, the type has not yet been determined. Various options have been discussed by the project team, if this alignment is selected as the preferred the type of structure to be built would be determined in Phase 3 of the process.

CLC Comment

We need to keep in mind that switchbacks take up a lot of land and have a bigger impact on the natural environment.

Project Team Response

This is a good point. There is an asterisk in the evaluation tables that notes that the length for Forest Trail C may be underestimated as method of traversing the steep grades has not been determined yet. This is something that may be looked at in more detail in Phase 3

CLC Question

Are we considering Forest Trail C because Metrolinx won't let us use the right-of-way?

Project Team Response

No we are looking at Forest Trail C because there were requests from the public and members of the CLC to look at the west side of the rail line as opposed to the east side.

CLC Question

What were the comments from the public regarding Area 1 and Forest Trail A?

Project Team Response

Comments focused on the desire to minimize impacts to the natural environment. Concerns were also raised about the potential impacts the implementation of a multi-use trail would have on the existing informal trail system.

CLC Question

Are we saying a large amount of informal trails is good or bad?

Project Team Response

Some public members prefer the informal trail system from a user experience perspective and feel that the addition of a multi-use trail would change the character of the area.

From an environmental perspective, in areas where multiple informal trails exist, wide spread impacts to the natural environment are experienced. Establishing a main, multi-use trail can help concentrate these impacts into a smaller area.

In regards to Forest Trail C few to no informal trails are present; in this case we would be leading additional users into the relatively undisturbed area. This is considered a negative impact in Forest Trail C in the evaluation.

CLC Comment

The future connections associated with Forest Trail A are a huge plus for our organization and we are really hoping for this connection.

CLC Comment

More invasive species are connected with informal trails. In the area where Forest Trail C is located we have less invasive species currently because there are fewer disturbances. If we implement Forest Trail C we cannot get this relatively pristine area back once we change it.

CLC Comment

Forest Trail C, regarding the ground condition images and topographic map, why is there a big bend at the location where we see the images 8 and 9? We should be showing more bends to represent the switchback or grade change required.

Project Team Response

The large bend is meant to represent that this area is steep and the trail would not be able to be designed in a straight line. As noted, we have not yet fully defined how the incline will be traversed, this would be determined in Phase 3 if Forest Trail C is the preferred alternative.

CLC Comment

Regarding Forest Trail C, it is undesirable to be by the railroad track and we also know they will be expanding these tracks in the future bringing more train traffic to the area. There are also sewer lines that we cannot do anything about in this area. We have seen these restrictions and been through these steps already as a group, revisiting this area does not make sense.

Project Team Response

The project team is noting that members of the CLC present at the meeting were in general agreement that Forest Trail C was not the preferred alternative for going forward.

CLC Comment

We would like to see more about the quality of the wildlife/habitat that should be preserved noted in the evaluation for Forest Trail C. While the locals may like the network of informal paths currently present east of the river in the Anewen Greenbelt, these trails are a bigger detriment to the natural environment. Generally, they are more of a cultural use than environmental consideration.

REFINEMENT OF ALTERNATIVE TRAIL ALIGNMENTS – AREA 2

VT presented the refinements to the Area 2 alignments as a result of public and stakeholder feedback. This included the addition of Rail Trail East and Shared Use alignments, and the evaluation of these two alignments against River Walk (preliminary preferred alternative).

Rail Trail East

CLC Comment

There is a lot of groundwater seepage near photo 6 (as shown in the presentation). There is an informal trail that goes through there and it is always muddy.

Project Team Response

This has been noted.

CLC Comment

One of the things we were hoping to avoid is cutting the toes on slopes. That is a very disruptive thing to do. They are natural formations. What is under the area shown in photos 6 and 7 (as shown in the presentation)? Has this area already been disturbed? We need to consider this and should look closely at where we can go to have fewer disturbances.

CLC Comment

In response to the comment above, I would like to note that there was erosion at the west end of Bermondsey yard and they remediated the slope being referenced because of water running down slope. Erosion blankets were put down and the area was planted. The remediated slope is taking well.

Project Team Response

What we are hearing is that the implementation of Rail Trail East would involve the alteration of an already restored slope making it a less natural area.

CLC Comment

In the area shown in photos 6 and 7 (as shown in the presentation) there would be a need for quite a high structure to cross the tributary.

CLC Comment

From my perspective Rail Trail East is not a logical choice for this project. The project should be about the natural beauty of the valley and Rail Trail East does not meet this objective. From my perspective, this alignment is basically between a hill and a railroad track.

CLC Question

What is the potential for connection to Eglinton Avenue with the Rail Trail East alignment?

Project Team Response

This item is addressed in the evaluation. By building the bridge north of Eglinton we would be building an easy/nice transition to Eglinton Avenue. Members of the Eglinton LRT project team sit on our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and we have begun discussions about what they would like to see.

CLC Question

Are the pieces of additional land owned by the rail line currently in use by them?

Project Team Response

No, they are both on slopes. Our TAC suggested that CN may have used this land as a historical dumping area but that is just an assumption.

CLC Question

With the Rail Trail East alignment, would there be erosion onto the trail of sand/silt or ice build-up as a result of being at the toe of slope?

Project Team Response

There are potentially both positive and negative impacts when comparing the trail on the east versus west of the rail. Being further from the river would make it less susceptible to flooding and erosion, however, if the trail extends along the toe of the east valley slope, it may be more susceptible to siltation from slope weathering or wetting from groundwater or seepages. The key is to ensure the trail is adequately designed to minimize negative impacts, for example, providing appropriate distances from the river channel if the trail is on the west side, or appropriate drainage buffers to minimize wetting and sedimentation along the east.

CLC Question

There is no bridge as shown in the area in photos 8 and 9 (as shown in the presentation) will a culvert be put in place here?

Project Team Response

No, that is an error on the mapping. There should be a circle there to denote the bridge. It should be noted however that this bridge has been considered in the evaluation. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Comment

In the email material provided to the CLC (the Project Team Follow-up Table) there was a question about the gas pipeline. We can see evidence of it through a marker that is visible in photo 14 (as shown in the presentation).

Project Team Response

Yes, that is correct; there is an Enbridge gas pipeline in this area. This has been mapped on our larger mapping. There are no issues with building on top of this pipeline however, we will not be able to excavate down or have any light fixtures within a 30 metre buffer. The project team was also recently informed of an oil pipeline located within our regional study area and outside of our local study area, therefore not impacting our project.

Shared Use

CLC Question

What is the perspective we are seeing in photo #2 (as shown in the presentation)?

Project Team Response

It is a view from the east bank of the river looking downstream.

CLC Question

Who owns the banks of the river? And who has jurisdiction over them?

Project Team Response

The Flemingdon Park Golf Club owns to the river's edge and possibly into the river. In terms of jurisdiction, TRCA's policies apply no matter who owns the land within the floodplain. The whole valley is under our regulation and there are a variety of provincial acts that pertain to it. That is different than ownership though.

CLC Question

Are there any ways within any of the legislation to access some of the edge land along the river?

Project Team Response

The river's edge is defined by the river bed to the high water mark. You would not really be past the top of bank as that is private land.

CLC Question

What if there was restoration to the river required as part of the implementation of the project?

Project Team Response

If it was part of the project, we would pay for it as part of that. However, if the Flemington Park Golf Club had problems they would likely have to pay to deal with any issues on their own.

CLC Comment

The banks are eroding because the golf course is not a natural use of the valley. This is important to note.

CLC Question

Will we have fence on both sides of the trail to implement Rail Trail East?

Project Team Response

If we are out of the rail line's Right-of-Way we would not be required to fence but there is a high likelihood that some areas would be fenced, this will be looked in further detail during the next steps.

CLC Comment

It should be noted that fencing on both sides does not follow the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, and this should be considered.

Project Team Response

Noted by project team.

CLC Question

In terms of fencing what are the things you are required to do? Where can we find creative solutions?

Project Team Response

There are only requirements if we are on Metrolinx property. There are not currently any associated with the golf course. However, if we did implement the Shared Use Alignment the golf course would have the opportunity to stipulate the need for fencing as a result of liability from their end both from golf balls (safety), and keeping general public out (business operations). Metrolinx has stipulations based on the distance from the centre of the rail track and the requirements are very different depending on the location and situation. Metrolinx would not require us to fence but if a trail went in next to their rail line, it is likely that area would get identified as a priority for their fencing program. .

CLC Comment

The type of fencing is very important here in terms of how it is designed. A natural fence would let wildlife pass through while netted fencing would prevent movement of everyone. These design considerations are very important event at this stage in the process.

CLC Question

How wide is the right-of-way here?

Project Team Response

It is 7 meters wide, so there is still some buffer if somebody needs to go around or a vehicle needs to go down.

CLC Comment

As a golfer I do not anticipate that there would be any issue of space at the par 5 hole that runs along the Shared Use Alignment. I have golfed here and there is plenty of room.

CLC Comment

If you think of some of the chain-link fences near Rosedale valley road, you can barely see them anymore. If you can visualize vegetation over them they aren't that bad.

Project Team Response

That is very true. In the Lower Don there are also a lot artistic applications that are being added to beautify the fencing.

EVALUATION OF REVISED ALTERNATIVE TRAIL ALIGNMENTS

VT presented the evaluation of the revised alternative trail alignments for Areas 1 and 3.

CLC Question

For River Walk, there is an opportunity to naturalize the floodplain. Does it also consider the positive benefit of closing the golf course?

Project Team Response

The project team did not look at it quite like that. Closing it went together with adding natural cover, and was not considered as a separate benefit.

CLC Response

I am thinking of it from the perspective on less pesticides, etc.

Project Team Response

We will look at the evaluation again and ensure that we look at it from that lens as well. Regardless of the pesticide points we do not know what the exact future uses of the land would be if it was acquired for parklands so we will not be able to articulate this in the details. We have to be careful how far we go with the evaluation as the acquisition will fall outside of the EA process. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Question

Is there a potential for relocation of the golf course to another place nearby? People who strongly support the golf course are not here today. Can we say there will be another one to replace this one or will there be one less?

Project Team Response

The City owns and operates three golf courses and we are not aware of any new courses being proposed.

CLC Comment

The existing golf courses are heavily used but there is not a lot of land to create new ones. Politically there is not a lot of support to build golf courses in the valleylands from an environmental perspective.

CLC Question

So if the golf course is closed a golfing opportunity is lost?

Project Team Response

Yes

CLC Comment

Actually there are five golf courses owned by the City that have seen decrease in use over the last 15 to 20 years. I read an article that said that they are losing the City money.

Project Team Response

We cannot speak to that directly, but TRCA owns Bathurst Glen golf course (open to the public) and it is not operated on a financial loss.

CLC Question

Why is Rail Trail East lower than River Walk in terms of noise disruptions?

Project Team Response

We will take another look at that. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Comment

Factories and the transfer station provide for a lot of disruption.

Project Team Response

Noted by project team. What we are hearing is why is there is a difference between shared use and rail trail east. We will look at this again.

CLC Comment

We have to expect that we will have some urban influences so I do not think it has some of the same weight as the natural and physical environment above. Same applies to aesthetics re: golf course, concrete, etc. I do not think they should receive the weighting that they do.

CLC Comment

There aren't many trains now but if this becomes a downtown relief line that will change. As a cyclist you cannot hear people, other cyclists, etc. if we start getting longer trains there is a minute or two that we cannot hear anything. River Walk is best in terms of least noise disruptions.

CLC Comment

When a fast train goes fast you may need a solid fence to mitigate the vacuum affect and noise from the fast passenger trains. It's going to get more serious if there is more train traffic in the future.

CLC Question

How far is Rail Trail East from the rail line versus Shared Use?

Project Team Response

Number to be confirmed **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Comment

In reference to safety, falling in the river is very different than getting hit by a train.

CLC Comment

Shared Use and Rail Trail should be both low. One other person agreed.

Project Team Response

The project team will look at this **(ACTION ITEM)**.

CLC Comment

Current naming of the trail alignments is confusing.

CLC Comment

It would be less confusing to completely rename the trail alignments and use descriptors in the naming.

Project Chair Comment

For the public, we are noting that the trail alignment may need to be renamed and it would be better to call shared use "rail trail amended", rail trail west, hillside or another option. The project team will look into this **(ACTION ITEM)**.

CLC Comment

There is a lot of impact for Rail Trail East but it is evaluated as medium, the same as Shared Use trail alignment. And they are very different and I do not think what is represented here is a true representation of the impacts.

CLC Comment

We would like to see the final ranked score for each of the criteria or summary. That may help us to understand the evaluation.

Project Team Response

To assist with understanding the qualitative evaluation, the project team will let the CLC know what the quantitative values are. The number is what will impact the evaluation and it has been simplified for this group. Project team to provide the summary of the quantitative values to the CLC **(ACTION ITEM)**

Project Team Response

To address the natural environment evaluation between the east and west alignments, it should be noted that these relate to the aquatic process and impacts on them.

CLC Comment

If you have to put forest against water quality the forest impacts should be higher.

CLC Comment

We need to consider raised boardwalks in wetland areas to prevent/mitigate impacts to wetlands

Project Team Response

Noted by the project team.

CLC Comment

Public perception of the rail trail alignments is that rail trails are normally paths on ripped up rail lines, need to consider this in the naming of the alignments.

CLC Comment

To clarify, the reader needs to be aware that cost shown in the evaluation criteria as lowest is actually the highest cost to implement.

FEEDBACK REGARDING CLC MEETING #6

VT explained that based on the amount of information to be reviewed at the next stage the project team is considering hosting two night sessions or one half day to cover the materials.

CLC members present noted that Saturday morning were the preferred time.

NS agreed to send a Doodle request to determine the best date and time for CLC Meeting #6.

CLC Comment

Could the project team provide the information for PIC#3 to the CLC soon as it would assist the CLC in advertising the event? Some of the lead times are long for the organizations.

Project Team Response

Project team will provide the date and location for the event as soon as possible. **(ACTION ITEM)**

CLC Comment

The cultural history of the valley is very important here and it has not come up to date. I would insist that we ensure that we lend credit to this piece at the next public event.

Project Team Response

The project team has noted this and has plans to include this component at the next public event. If any CLC members would like input, they can let the project team know. **(ACTION ITEM)**

NEXT STEPS

VT went through the Next Steps for the project.

VT asked if there were any additional questions before the meeting was closed.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:30 pm.

POST MEETING NOTES & CHANGES

A copy of the quantitative analysis was provided to the CLC in the CLC Dropbox folder.